Mr. Average American dissatisfied with speech

By Martin Gershen

Richard Johnson, selected as Mr. Average American by Public Broadcasting System researchers last year, said Wednesday night he wasn't satisfied with President Nixon's explanations on Watergate.

"I think he was involved (in Watergate) a longer time than he claims, unless he ran a lousy ship," Johnson said after watching the President's televised address to the nation.

Johnson, 44, of suburban Rolling Meadows, said he was a lifelong Democrat who voted Republican "for the first time in my life" in 1972.

"I wouldn't have voted for anybody if I'd known about this Watergate fiasco then," he said recently.

Johnson said he had been watching the Watergate hearings on television all summer and was looking forward to Mr. Nixon's address.

Johnson doesn't think Mr. Nixon's explanations were satisfactory.

"The tapes still disturb me," Johnson said. "The greatest dilemma this man has is that there is so much doubt and distrust in the minds of the people as to whether he is telling the truth. One way this distrust may in some way be removed is to let the Senate committee get a private listening of the tapes."

Johnson said he couldn't accept the President's explanations that the taped conversations were privileged. He agreed that some conversations may involve national security but he felt the Senate's committee could be trusted.

"I definitely have more faith in the committee than in the President," he said.

He did agree with the President that the Watergate hearings were dominating other matters of national importance.

Johnson, a credit manager for the National Steel Service Center in Evanston, was selected as Mr. Average American after PBS researchers picked Rolling Meadows as a typical middle-class community. The Johnson family was chosen to become the subject of two PBS programs in February and September, 1972.